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**ABSTRACT**

A universal shift apparatus and method for a swimming pool cover motor has a rotatable drive shaft and a rope attached to the end of the swimming pool cover. A reel element collects the rope, and a roll-up element collects the swimming pool cover. A gear drive assembly on the rotatable drive shaft drives the reel element in a first rotational direction as the shaft rotates in a first direction and drives the roll-up element in a second rotational direction as the shaft rotates in a second direction. A shift assembly is associated with the gear drive assembly to selectively reverse the first rotational direction of the wind-up reel element and to selectively reverse the second rotational direction of the roll-up element.